

FOIAB3B1

All

11 May 1955

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Acting Chief, [] FOIAB3B1

Transmission Precedences

FOIAB3B1 1. For some time this office has been concerned over delays of [] priority teletype traffic in the ACAN system. These delays have fortunately not been vital in many cases, but the danger has remained that transmission of vital information might at any time be interrupted because the need or authority for more expeditious handling was not evident. While an obvious solution is use of OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE (O) precedence, Army Signals has in the past refused to permit such precedence for [] traffic.

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FOIAB3B1 2. The Army Communications Staff in the Pentagon has recently liberalized its attitude toward [] traffic, and has verbally granted authority for use under appropriate circumstances of OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE precedence by all [] linked with ACAN. This authority is necessarily informal because Army regulations limit the use of OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE to "contact with the enemy." It is recognized, however, that there are many categories of information [] may monitor which are vital to this government and its Armed Forces but which cannot be construed as falling within the technical scope of the regulations.

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FOIAB3B1 3. In granting this authority the Army has requested that [] be judicious in selecting material for OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE transmission and that no multi-take messages be filed with the precedences. Only essential facts, therefore, should be filed OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE. Lengthy texts, etc. exceeding one take should follow Priority. The former should be used only to Washington, and to Theater Commands as appropriate. Service to other recipients should be accomplished through subsequent PRIORITY or ROUTINE filing.

4. Criteria for selection of material to be filed OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE are:

a. Is it of vital significance to the national security of the United States?

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b. If there is a short delay in receipt of the information by addressees, could its value be significantly impaired? Or conversely, will there be any substantial gain to the U. S. Government in receiving the information several hours sooner?

Obvious applications for this precedence include declarations of war, outbreaks of hostilities, indicators of immediate aggression, the unexpected fall of hostile or friendly governments, and the decease or sudden demise of a key figure in such a government if the incident appears to foreshadow any of the foregoing. The broadcast of Chou's reply four hours prior to Eisenhower's scheduled address to Congress on Formosa on 24 January 1955 is an example of material warranting such precedence. [] should establish necessary controls within their [] to prevent inappropriate OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE filing. FOIAB3C

5. ACAN is automatically obligated to handle OPERATIONAL IMMEDIATE traffic from any tributary instantly upon its receipt. Complaints against the use of this precedence conceivably could follow from the local Signal Officer. These should be accepted in good grace and if, after acquainting him with the facts, he wishes to cite the case to the Pentagon, we are assured by the latter it will support the [] position so long as there is no flagrant abuse of the principle. FOIAB3C

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cc: []

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